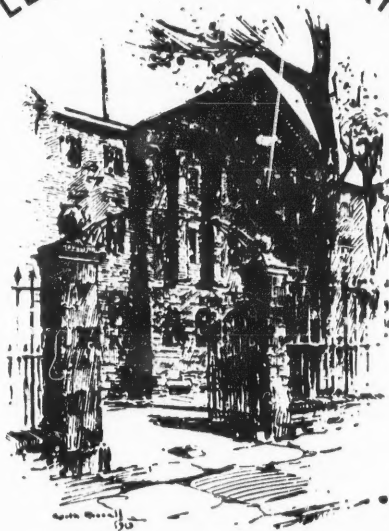


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THE
RULER'S DAUGHTER RAISED.

A

Funeral Discourse,

PREACHED

AT THE CHAPEL OF EASE, HALIFAX,

MARCH 16TH, 1851.

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PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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HALIFAX, N. S.

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THIS Sermon pretends to nothing beyond the ordinary instruction of the Pulpit; it was preached immediately after the lamented death of a young lady in Halifax, and is now published in deference to the expressed wishes of the Author's friends who heard it. It will have answered his design, if it convey consolation to those who mourn the early removal of so excellent a person, and serve as a memorial of her amiable life and peaceful death.

“ It matters little at what day or hour
The righteous fall asleep ; death cannot come
To those untimely who are fit to die ;
’The less of this cold world the more of heav’n,
The briefer life, the earlier immortality.”—

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SERMON.

MARK, v—39.

"Why make ye this ado and weep? The Damsel is not Dead but Sleepeth."

"*In the Garden there was a Sepulchre,*" is a true picture of human life. Whatever be our present condition and whatever be our prospects for the future, our destiny is the grave. It is the primeval curse upon an apostate race, and no power can reverse it; "*it is appointed unto all men once to die:*" but, our eternal dwelling place is not among the tombs; a merciful Saviour has mitigated the decree; and in all its worst and fearful features has "*abolished death;*" He has changed its character to sleep, and although enough of the malediction remains to invest it with sorrow, it is not enough to make it hopeless sorrow; for "*He has tasted death for every man.*" And we are now privileged to turn our eyes from the deserted sepulchre of Christ, to that glorious residence to which He has ascended, and to that Kingdom which He has "*opened to all believers.*"

The dead praise not God, neither they that go down into silence; they may speak to us of our mortality, and call forth our shudderings from their dreary abode; but we are permitted to look beyond; to look upon a brighter scene, and listen for the consoling words, "*Talitha cumi,*" and there shall be the resuscitation of those we mourn, and friend shall be restored to his friend, and the parent and the child shall be reunited in life, and there shall be no more separation for ever.

Treat it as you may, Death must be a subject of awe; its consequences are so fearful, that few can look upon it with unaverted eye; for "*after death there is the judgment*"—the judgment in which there can be no evasion or escape, and in the sentence of which there can be neither change nor termination. It is this, my brethren, which makes us shun the consideration of our mortality; it is because death is the sentence of wrath and the penalty of sin, that we "*make ado and weep*" when the *Last Enemy* has prevailed over those we love; and Christianity and Christianity only can assuage our grief and wipe away our tears: for Christianity is an affiance in Him who has destroyed death in all that is loathsome and terrible; and while it turns our thoughts to the exercise of His authority, it assures us that Death, although mighty over

the body, has no such power over the spirit ; so that, while with streaming eyes and pained hearts we survey the stretched-out body, pallid, inert, insensible, we may still adopt the language of the text, "*Why make ye this ado and weep, the damsel is not dead but sleepeth.*"

You must all be familiar with this scene in the house of Jairus, and with the miracle wrought upon his daughter ; but you may not have drawn from it all the consolation it is calculated to yield, and all the hope to be derived from the assurance—" *The damsel is not dead but sleepeth.*"

And did our Saviour mean to say that the report was groundless, and that all their fears were vain ? Did He mean to teach them that it was only imaginary death from which she might revive without the exercise of faith, and without the power of a miracle ? No, my brethren : to all common apprehension she was deceased ; the vital spirit had departed and no human remedy could avail ; all her friends were convinced of her death ; so that the very words which conveyed a different impression called forth incredulous contempt. St. Luke says, "*they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.*" But what we are to understand, we may learn from the Gospel of St. John, which records the raising of Lazarus, after four days of interment ; we find it written in the eleventh Chapter, "*and after that He saith unto them, our friend Lazarus sleepeth, and I go that I may awake him out of sleep ;*" like the tumultuous mourners in the ruler's house, they mistook His words and said, "*Lord if he sleep he shall do well ;*" but our Blessed Lord at once undeceived them, and left to His Church a consolatory truth when He "*said plainly Lazarus is dead.*" These scenes have passed, but, their precious lessons remain, and they will ever serve to teach Christians how to look upon death, and how to sorrow in bereavement. We have proof in this miracle—in the restoration of the widow's son, and in the resurrection of Lazarus, that the spirit of life is inextinguishable ; that the flame once lighted up in the human bosom is lighted up for ever. The Christian may slumber, but cannot die ; the Christian may fall asleep, but cannot perish, for *God hath received him.* It is to this assurance that Christ has abolished death, and that He has brought life and immortality to light, that we trace the triumph and tranquillity of death-bed scenes,—"*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him.*" No expression can be more tender and impressive than that which makes *death* and *sleep* to be one and same thing ; and it is peculiar to Christianity ; for death had never been described as a sweet repose until Christ so described it. I do not say that the image of sleep had never been employed to represent death. Death was sleep even to the apprehension of the heathen ; but, it was stern, inactive, interminable sleep ; it was reserved to Christianity to reveal that we are to awake out of sleep—to awake with accumulated health and strength and beauty and enjoyment—to reveal that in the resurrection,

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"this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

And now the sepulchres of the dead are but the dormitories of saints ; in this miracle we have the pledge and the proof that to die is not to perish ; but to fall asleep in Christ, as the weary child sinks to repose upon the bosom of its mother : it is to go home to the place prepared for us—to rest from labour after the burden and heat of the day ; it is to escape from all the remains of sin, and from all the pressure of trial and temptation—from a world *lying in wickedness*, where sorrow is our birthright, and suffering our blessing, to that pavilion of peace, where Christ shall reign in glory and we shall be like unto him : it is to exchange a nature, defiled by sin, disordered by sickness, distressed by temptation and despoiled by death, for the purity and perfection of that benignant Saviour, who is light and love ; who, while upon earth prayed that we might be with Him, and who, at His return shall gather his saints together, and clothe them with His righteousness, and conform them to His image.—*"But as for me, I shall behold thy presence in righteousness, and when I wake up in thy likeness I shall be satisfied with it."* This, my dear brethren is the hope of Christians ; once allied to Christian life, there is no power in death to break the bond ;—there is no real, positive, unconquerable death for those who *"have received the spirit of life in Christ Jesus."* To the universe they seem to die and their departure is taken for destruction ; but, they live although they die ; although they consume away they are indestructible ;—although slain in martyrdom, maimed and dismembered, burned in the fire or buried in the flood, still *"right dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints ;"* and nothing can make it other than a rest from their labours—a calm repose from which they shall awake with all their faculties invigorated and refreshed, when Jesus shall come again and bring all his accepted servants with him. *"I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord, he who believeth in me, tho' he die yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."*

But there are other sources of felicity in the house of mourning, and there are other words of comfort with which we may prophecy over the congregation or the dead. In this scene there were Peter and James and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. It is not only that Jesus shall return and we shall see him as he is ;—it is not only that we shall hear his voice and live : it is not only that we shall be with him and share his glory ; it is not that he shall *come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him ;* but, that added to this shining train, shall be all that *"sleep in Jesus"*—all who have loved him in sincerity, and have entered into his everlasting rest. This is our *consolation and good hope through grace.* We have times of joy, but they are brief, and dashed with earth and earthly things, and we are bidden to *"rejoice with trembling"* and to be prepared for the days of evil ; we have

kind friends, but they are not ensured to us for an hour, and we watch with painful apprehension every tottering footstep and every shade of change. "*Man dieth and wasteth away, he giveth up the Ghost and where is he?*" We can hold no communion with the dead; but, it is not to the grave that we look for comfort;—it is not to the grave that we follow the friends that we have loved. It is true that *being dead they yet speak to us*, but, their voice cometh not from the sepulchre: "*our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ*," and we look for Him, not alone, but, accompanied by all who "*sleep in Him*;"—by all who have departed in the true faith of His holy name; by all those dear ones with whom we have "*taken sweet counsel upon earth*," and who have gone before us to the place prepared for them; but this is not all; we shall not only meet them *alive*, we shall meet them *immortal*, with a glorious body, and incapable of decay; "*neither shall they die any more, for they are equal with the angels, and are the children of God being the children of the resurrection*." The mind labors in following out this succession of glorious events, but, they serve us in every emergency; and so in every hour of sickness and sorrow and bereavement we comfort one another with these words.

We cannot penetrate the veil of eternity; we cannot follow the released spirit to its secret abode, or tell the manner of its existence, or the measure of its beatitude; all we know is, that it has *returned to God who gave it*; that it has met with Jesus in Paradise, and is made an assessor of His throne and a partaker of His glory. And what manner of existence must this be; which consists in being "*for ever with the Lord*"—to be like unto Him and to be brought with Him to the great Easter of the universe, the joyous meeting of all *the redeemed among men*; to behold Him in "*the midst of the throne as it were a Lamb that had been slain*;" to see that very human form which He assumed for our sake, in which for us and for our salvation He endured the agony of the Garden, and the excruciation on the Mount; and which form of man is not lost amidst the triumph and splendor of a throne—a throne of glory,—even upon earth there come irradiations from that throne—they brightened the face of Stephen when he *fell asleep in martyrdom*, and they have been reflected by believers on the bed of death, as "*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*." Who then can truly estimate the perfection of that knowledge and the fulness of that glory—when the veil of immortality shall be lifted up and we shall see the eternal God and Saviour as he is! When *with open face*, but not reflected as from a glass, "*we shall behold the glory of the Lord, and be changed into the same image from glory to glory*."

Yet it is not only in the *manner of existence* that we rejoice, but in the *measure of beatitude*, of which also we can judge in part, in the absence of all pain and the freedom from all change; for they not only *fall asleep in*

Christ, but, are for ever with the Lord. Released from doubt, released from temptation—released from pain; there shall be no more night—no more sea—no more death; it is no wonder that the Apostle in the contemplation of such a change should bid his converts not to sorrow without hope; and they who have watched through successive days and nights, the failings of flesh and heart, the restless enquiries for the shadows of the night, and *tossings to and fro until the dawning of the day*; they who have witnessed the throes of the failing body, and have heard the threnes of the agitated mind, as the last links are broken that bind us to the earth, must feel that there is wisdom in the Scripture which saith—“*weep not for the dead* ;” or according to the text, “*Why make ye this ado and weep?*” *They are not dead but sleep.* We may sorrow, but, it cannot be for them—it must be sorrow altogether selfish; sorrow that we have lost their advice, their example, their companionship; but, even this is mitigated by the revelations of the Gospel, by the assurance that these shall be restored, and that the re-union shall be eternal; the time of separation is but the passing watch of an undisturbed night, and there shall be a simultaneous awakening and a joyful recognition—we have this sort of consolation opened to us in the Scripture, we draw the same inference from the text; that there shall be a re-union in the heavenly world with those we have loved upon earth, and with all those who have “*loved our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.*” The Scriptures, although they do not satisfy an unprofitable curiosity about the “*things unseen,*” afford sufficient knowledge to enable us to walk by faith and to rejoice in hope; and although we can only measure the joys of heaven by negation; by the absence of those things which must hurt and distress us; there is one positive happiness about which they have not left us to conjecture; the meeting and recognition of our friends in the future and eternal world. For the confirmation of this truth, we owe something to this text; for the spirit of the maiden, although separated from earth, was still alive, active and intelligent—still obedient to the voice of Jesus, and ready to rejoin the body it had left untenanted—and in the presence of his servants and her own Father and Mother, “*He took the damsel by the hand and said unto her TALITHA CUMI, which is being interpreted, Damsel I say unto thee arise, and straightway the damsel arose and walked.*” And in this we have a pattern of what shall happen hereafter, when all that are “*in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they who hear shall live* ;” and there will be a joyful meeting together in the very presence of their compassionate Saviour, in the light of whose countenance and in the possession of whose love they shall live in glory and shall live for ever.

O, who shall estimate aright the felicity of this scene, when our knowledge shall be increased, and our capacity for happiness shall be complete; when we shall feel no want and dread no change. There must have been joy in the house of *Jairus* when in the presence of her father and mother, with the flush

of health upon her cheek, and the lustre of loving recognition in her eye, she rose and walked. Who can tell the rapture with which the bereaved parents hailed their recovered child, as *the spirit came into her again*, and *they were astonished with great astonishment*; and yet it came back to a body of sin and to a world of woe; to be again susceptible of all the evils it had escaped, and all the wants which our frailty create; of this they must have felt the force, even before the first gush of their tenderness had stopped, and when "*Jesus commanded that something should be given her to eat.*"

But, we look for another and more blissful scene, when our God shall take by the hand all who sleep in Jesus; and shall bring them with Him to the happiness of life and the blessedness of heaven; when every want shall be supplied and every hope fulfilled, "*and they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light upon them or any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*" And shall we not pray earnestly for this consummation of bliss, and look forward for its enjoyment?

They who now mourn over the grave of yesterday can best tell upon what endearments that grave has closed, and to what manifestations of faith and patience that grave will open, when all the cemeteries of earth are broken up and their sleeping tenantry shall arise at "*the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God.*"—" *The Damsel is not dead but sleepeth.*" We would not wake her out of sleep, even if our utterance of TALITHA CUMI were charged with the same mighty and mysterious power. She has fallen asleep in Christ. We would not awake her up to earth, though earth should receive her to its brightest scenes. We would not, even if we could, disturb the tranquillity of the righteous dead, but like the stricken Psalmist we comfort ourselves with the assurance that "we shall go to her, but that she shall not return unto us."

The disciples said, "*thy daughter is dead, trouble not the Master.*" To all natural perception she was dead, and prayers and tears would be of no avail; but, we say trouble not yourselves, for to all spiritual perception she is alive—alive unto God, and cannot die—" *The damsel is not dead but sleepeth.*" Yes, my beloved brethren, we believe this: "*her spirit hath returned to God who gave it,*" and we would not call it back to an evil world which she had learned to fear, and to scenes of frailty in which she was sorely exercised, and suffered patiently; these scenes are sacred to her friends and dear to God. But our business is with the living, as we close the portals of earth upon the dead; to warn those who rejoice and comfort those who mourn: to warn the one from this *early* death, that a cloud may suddenly obscure the sunniest day of life, that neither youth or prosperity are a sure defence, and that no summer parlour is a safe retreat from the embassy of the grave; and

to comfort the other in this *happy* death, that they sorrow not hopelessly, and to confirm the assurance that "*the damsel is not dead but sleepeth.*"

We may sorrow indeed, for christianity is as tender in its sympathies as it is holy in its tendency and magnificent in its discoveries. The feeling of sadness can never be wrong in itself, for it has been authorised by inspiration, and has been sanctified by the heaviness and the tears of the Son of God, and so long as we retain and cherish the brief but affecting sentence, "*Jesus wept,*" we need not fear that sorrow is sinful, when awakened by love and subdued by hope. We cannot stop the gush of sorrow which comes from lacerated hearts; we cannot part with our friends around whom all our affections are entwined, without some sensations of sorrow; but when the soul is most disquieted, as we see the last struggle and hear the last sigh, there comes sweeping over the heart-strings, (O, for the tongue of an angel to announce the beautiful text,)—"*the damsel is not dead but sleepeth.*"

We look not for this miracle—we look for a greater, when all that sleep in Christ shall awake—when all who have died in the Lord shall live:—we look for this, because we believe in the truth and confide in the power of Him, who has said, "*because I live, ye shall live also.*" The term of sleep is but the passing watch of night, and although protracted to a thousand years, it is but as yesterday—the separation is short, but the reunion will be eternal. Judge not your friends to be lost, they have closed their eyes one watch only before ourselves—they have entered into rest,

"Their citadel of peace in Jesu's blood."

But they have left us the watchword at the grave. "*The righteous hath hope in his death!*" Be therefore among the righteous, and God shall preserve the identity of your friends, and with *their* Saviour and your Saviour, you shall see them again. Be ye among the righteous, and then ye need not sorrow immoderately and without hope. "*Mourn not for the dead,*" for the righteous dead are blessed, and the care of them is with the Most High: mourn rather for yourselves that you have yet to struggle for life, and to "*fear lest a promise being made of entering into rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.*" Be ye among the righteous, and then bless God that earth is not your abiding place; that your eternal inheritance is not among the tombs. Be ye among the righteous, and then in every calamity, you will recognise the hand and acknowledge the mercy of God; who, while he bereaves us of our friends upon earth, reserves for us our friends in heaven; who, while he snaps asunder the dearest ties that bind us to this world, opens to us the everlasting gates of the world to come, and fills it with the objects of our earthly love.

With this blessed hope, we may thank God for the emancipation of our friends, and wait in faith and patience for our own.